

Profiles

Individuals

Gerry Adams



Born in 1948 in Catholic West Belfast, Adams came from a family with a strong republican tradition, his father having been imprisoned during the IRA campaign in the 1940s. After leaving school at seventeen, he worked as a barman until the beginning of the Troubles in 1969. His active involvement in republican politics goes back to the 1960s and he has been part of the so-called provisional wing of the movement ever since its split in 1970. He is alleged to have held senior positions in the IRA, although he has always denied membership. He was interned without trial in 1971 and released in July 1972 to take part in the delegation representing the IRA at a meeting with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in London. During a second period in prison between 1973 and 1976, he and his fellow prisoners began to develop the new political strategy that was to characterize the movement from the 1980s. In 1978 Adams was elected vice-president of Sinn Féin, becoming president in 1983. In 1982, in the wake of the republican hunger strikes, he won a seat in the Northern Ireland Assembly for West Belfast. In 1983 (and subsequently) he was elected to the UK parliament but, unwilling to take the oath of allegiance to the Queen required of new members, he has never taken his seat. He became the most prominent spokesperson for the republican movement and, more than anyone else, has personified its political development. He has been the target of a number of violent loyalist attacks and in 1984 was shot and wounded. In spite of his increasing public profile and his status as an elected representative, he and other leaders of Sinn Féin were snubbed by foreign governments for many years. Adams' meeting with the Taoiseach in the week following the IRA ceasefire of 1994 and his being granted a visa to enter the United States were seen as key steps in the peace process.

John Hume



Source: Pacemaker Press

Born in Derry in 1937, Hume studied near Dublin and then returned home to teach French. He became active in the civil rights movement and was elected to the Northern Ireland Parliament in 1969. In 1970 he co-founded the SDLP and won a seat in the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1973. He was appointed Minister for Commerce in the short-lived power-sharing executive in 1974. Keenly aware of the benefits of cross-border co-operation he has advanced the role of economic development in the resolution of the conflict, using the EU as a model. He has been a member of the European parliament since the first elections in 1979 and was elected to the UK parliament in 1983. He was instrumental in developing the role of the Irish government as a protector of the interests of the minority in Northern Ireland as expressed in the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. In the late 1980s his analysis led him, alone among constitutional politicians, to believe that Sinn Féin should be brought into the political process. He developed contacts with Sinn Féin, which eventually led to what has come to be known as the Hume-Adams dialogue. When it became public in 1993 he was heavily criticized, not least by members of his own party who felt he was giving credibility to Sinn Féin and increasing its electoral threat to the SDLP. Recently Hume's health has been uncertain and he may be forced to take less part in the detail of policy. In 1998 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, jointly with David Trimble, for his contribution to the peace process. He is generally regarded as one of the most far-sighted politicians in Northern Ireland and perhaps has had a more significant impact on the peace process than any other politician.

David Trimble



Source: Chris Riddwell

Born in 1945 in Bangor Trimble graduated in law from Queen's University in 1968 and remained there as a lecturer until 1993. He was a founder member of the Vanguard Unionist Party in 1973 and from 1985 was involved in the Ulster Clubs. Although both organizations were formed to challenge appeasement by mainstream unionism he supported the Vanguard leader's proposals for sharing power with nationalist parties in 1975. He later joined the UUP and used his legal skills behind the scenes until his election to the UK parliament as MP for Upper Bann in 1992. His constituency includes Drumcree, the notorious flashpoint of tensions over the routing of an Orange Order parade through a nationalist area. An attempt by the government to ban the parade in 1995 resulted in a challenge to the security forces by the Orange Order, which refused to accept the ruling. This posed a major threat to public order, but Trimble negotiated for the parade to proceed. This performance was assumed to have made him attractive particularly to hardline UUP members and so, despite being the party's newest MP, he was elected its leader in November 1996. Under his leadership the UUP entered multi-party talks. Although commentators initially found it difficult to assess his commitment to the process, he continued to participate in the talks following the entry of Sinn Féin, despite strong opposition from within his own party. The resulting Belfast Agreement provided for the establishment of new institutions in Northern Ireland. After an 18-month deadlock caused by lack of progress in decommissioning, David Trimble steered his party towards accepting participation in the new institutions on the understanding that decommissioning would eventually take place. In 1998 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, jointly with John Hume, for his contribution to the peace process.

Governments and inter-governmental organizations

British Government

Though policies regarding Northern Ireland have varied, the British government has persisted with proposals for devolving power to a local assembly, in which power is shared between nationalists and unionists. Successive British governments have attempted to maintain a neutral stance on relations with the political parties, but this aim has rarely been achieved and both communities have remained suspicious of their motivation. Unionists have been dissatisfied with British consultations with the Irish government since the 1980s and would like a more forceful law and order policy. Nationalists find the law and order policy discriminatory and in breach of human rights. They have seen the government's constitutional guarantee that the status of Northern Ireland will not change without the agreement of a majority of the population as a unionist veto on any proposals. The department that deals with Northern Ireland affairs is the Northern Ireland Office, headed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Recent holders of this office are Peter Brooke (1989–92) and Patrick Mayhew (1992–97), both for Conservative governments, and Marjorie (Mo) Mowlam (1997–99) and Peter Mandelson for the current Labour government.

Royal Irish Regiment

The RIR is Northern Ireland's regiment of the British Army. It incorporates the former Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), most of whose members were part-time and Protestant. The UDR was unacceptable to the nationalist population and the merger was an attempt to improve its image. Other British regiments also serve in Northern Ireland, although the British government has reduced the number dramatically in recent years.

Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)

The Northern Ireland police force has around 8,500 full-time officers, 3,000 reservists and 2,000 part-timers. Republicans consider it to be the armed wing of an illegitimate state. The Hunt Report of 1969 recommended reforms, including the disbanding of the part-time reserve B-Specials who were particularly trusted by unionists and particularly hated by nationalists. The government also adopted the recommendation that RUC officers should not carry weapons, but escalating violence led to a reversal of this policy. In the 1970s, security had been increasingly the role of the British Army, but in the 1980s primary responsibility for security was returned to the heavily armed RUC in an attempt to create a sense of normality. Between 1969 and 1994, 169 officers were killed in the Troubles. During the early 1980s

nationalist distrust was reinforced following allegations that the force was pursuing a shoot-to-kill policy and using informers. In its fight against terrorism the RUC has developed closer co-operation with the Garda Síochána (Irish police). Despite attempts to attract applications from both communities, fewer than ten per cent of RUC members are Catholics. As part of the peace process a review of the RUC was carried out by Chris Patten, a former minister in the Conservative government, to consider ways to make the police service more acceptable to all sections of the community. His proposals, which include a change of name to the Northern Ireland Police Service, have been opposed by many unionists who believe the RUC to be a professional force protecting the community. The RUC was awarded the George Cross for civilian bravery in November 1999.

European Union

As an organization for co-operation between the countries and governments of European states, the European Union supports efforts for peace in Northern Ireland financially and politically. Its promotion of a federal Europe of the regions, cross-border institutions and support for power-sharing increased unionist suspicion that the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic would disappear. However, the EU's economic support has contributed to significant economic development and thereby helped to create the conditions that led to the peace process. It created the £1 billion Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation as the peace process gained momentum. It also commissioned the Haagerup Report, which in 1984 recommended increased intergovernmental co-operation, but has not otherwise intervened in the resolution of the conflict apart from support for the British and Irish governments.

Irish Government

The Irish Constitution of 1937 contains articles which claim jurisdiction over the six counties of Northern Ireland, but the Irish government had no formal role in the resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland until the Anglo-Irish Agreement provided structures for consultation in 1985. The constitutional claim had been a stumbling block for unionist relations with the Irish government and is replaced under the 1998 Belfast Agreement. The peace process has seen close co-operation and a number of joint statements and initiatives, from the Downing Street Joint Declaration in 1993 to the Heads of Agreement in 1998. Irish politicians have generally been more open to moves from republican and nationalist parties in the North than the British government. The Dáil Éireann is the lower house of the Irish Parliament whose members are elected by universal suffrage. Parties holding seats in 1999 include

Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Irish Labour Party, Progressive Democrats, Green Party and Sinn Féin. The party commanding a majority forms the government, but in recent times no party has held a clear majority. The upper house is called the Senate or Seanad. The department dealing with Northern Irish matters is the Department of Foreign Affairs but in recent times the Taoiseach (the Prime Minister) has been directly involved. The holders of this office in recent times have been Garret Fitzgerald of Fine Gael (1982–87), Charles Haughey (1987–92) and Albert Reynolds (1992–95), both of Fianna Fáil, John Bruton of Fine Gael (1995–97) and (from 1997) Bertie Ahern of Fianna Fáil.

United States of America

Successive US governments have taken an active interest in the Northern Ireland situation. The influence of the Irish lobby in the US has kept the issue high on the political agenda. President Clinton has followed the peace process closely and visited Northern Ireland in 1995. That same year he created controversy in Northern Ireland by granting Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin a visa to visit the US. The political parties in Northern Ireland are keen to maintain the goodwill of the US administration. Economic aid from the US represents another contribution to the search for peace in Northern Ireland. The chairman of the 1996–98 talks, George Mitchell, is a former US Senator.

Political parties and organizations

Alliance Party

Formed in 1970 as a moderate cross-community party, with mainly middle class support, the Alliance Party's share of the vote has remained small. In the 1997 general election, it polled eight per cent of the vote in Northern Ireland. This was enough to achieve representation in the Forum and the talks. The Alliance Party favours partnership government between the two communities and North–South links.

Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

Formed in 1971 by Revd Ian Paisley who has led the party since then, the DUP is an uncompromising unionist party. As a party of protest it has been involved in numerous demonstrations which contributed to the escalation of street rioting and fighting. Its leader has always denounced the use of force, but he has been associated with rather shadowy organizations such as Ulster Resistance (some of whose members have been caught in the possession of illegal weapons) and the Third Force. The party has maintained the support of two diverse populations: respectable Protestant fundamentalists

(mainly from rural areas and small towns) and aggressive militant loyalists (mainly from working class areas of Belfast). However, since the late 1980s loyalists, particularly in paramilitary groups, have become increasingly disenchanted with Paisley's leadership. As a result he is no longer able to rely on the level of mass support he could once command and has been less able to disrupt the political process through street protest. The DUP's relations with the other main unionist party, the UUP, have varied between co-operation and open hostility as they compete for popular support. After securing representation in the Forum for Political Dialogue and talks, Paisley's party withdrew from the talks in the summer of 1997, protesting at Sinn Féin participation. In common with other unionist parties, it rejected the proposals in the Downing Street Declaration and the Frameworks for the Future document for undermining the union with Britain. It regards the Belfast Agreement as a betrayal by the British government and the UUP. Despite the DUP's opposition to the Belfast Agreement they have two members in the Executive formed in 1999.

Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP)

This small Marxist republican party was founded in 1974 by members of Official Sinn Féin who were dissatisfied by the lack of militancy in the main party. Ex-Westminster MP Bernadette McAliskey (née Devlin) was a founder member. The party has never been able to gain much popular support, probably because of its uncompromising left wing politics and the recurrent internal factional fighting in the INLA with which it is associated.

Orange Order

The Orange Order, formed in 1795 after sectarian conflict in County Armagh, is a quasi-political loyalist club modelled on the Freemasons. Its founders used the Protestant William of Orange as their figurehead because he replaced the Catholic King James as king of England, having defeated him at the Battle of the Boyne. The Order's rules restrict membership to Protestants, and there are about 80 – 100,000 members in Ireland, mostly male. Orangemen hold church services and engage in a series of annual parades, a minority of which are contested by residents in Catholic areas. Orange Order parades, characterized by bright banners and marching bands, are perhaps the most easily identifiable aspect of Protestant culture. They are colourful to supporters but menacing to their opponents. The Orange Order has a significant influence on the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).

Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)

Seen as the political wing of the loyalist paramilitary group the UVF, the PUP was formed in 1979 and describes itself as a socialist party. After the loyalist ceasefires of October 1994, the PUP was invited, along with the UDP, to engage in dialogue with British government officials and subsequently won seats in the election to the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue and the multi-party talks. In the 1997 General Election the PUP gained just three per cent of the vote in Northern Ireland. It has two members in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Sinn Féin

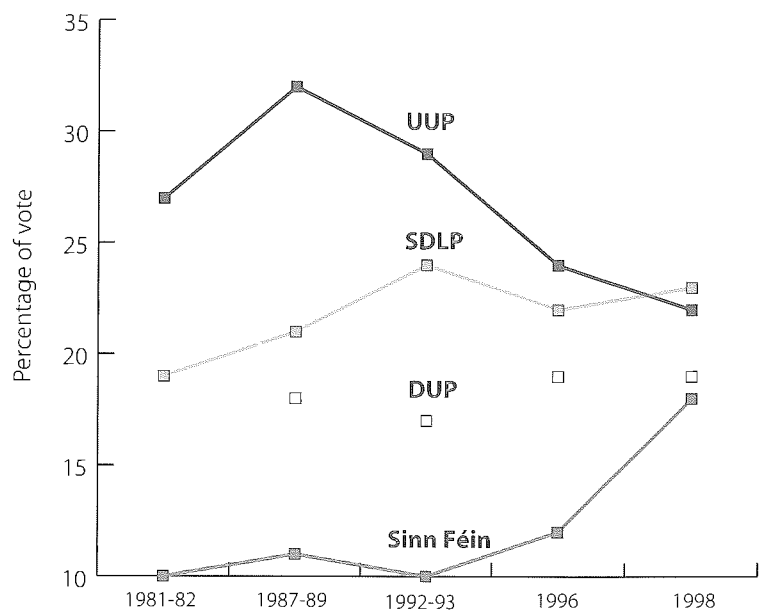
A republican political party organized on an all-Ireland basis, Sinn Féin (We Ourselves) is widely seen as the political wing of the IRA even though the party stresses that it is a separate body. Like the IRA, Sinn Féin split into separate official and provisional organizations in 1970 over the failure of the organization to respond to the situation in the North of Ireland. It is still often called Provisional Sinn Féin. It has supported the use of force as a necessary strategy to expel Britain from the Six Counties. In refusing to recognize the legitimacy of existing institutions for government in Northern Ireland and the Republic, Sinn Féin had a policy of abstention, but in the 1980s it adopted some changes to allow it to take seats in local councils and later in the Irish parliament. However, the policy still applies to the Westminster parliament. Sinn Féin boycotted the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue but took

part in the multi-party talks from 1997 after agreeing to the Mitchell Principles. Since the party has supported the peace process its vote has risen steadily from 11.3% in the 1989 local council elections to 16.9% in the 1997 local council elections. During the 1970s Sinn Féin favoured federal arrangements for Ireland's government. Now the preference is for a united Ireland with regional councils, although it is willing to work within the institutions established by the Belfast Agreement on the basis that they have an all-Ireland dimension.

Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

The SDLP, the main constitutional and nationalist party, was formed in 1970. Traditionally pressing for power-sharing arrangements and an Irish dimension in the government of Northern Ireland, the party recognizes the need for consent for a united Ireland from the majority of voters in Northern Ireland. Party Leader John Hume was involved in exploratory talks with Sinn Féin which brought them into the political process. Though opposed to the proposals for an elected Forum, the SDLP contested elections and took part in all-party talks. Party member Seamus Mallon was elected Deputy First Minister in the 1998 Northern Ireland Assembly following the Belfast Agreement. With 24.1% of the vote in the 1997 general election the SDLP is the largest nationalist party and the second largest party in Northern Ireland. In the new government formed in November 1999 it took three ministerial posts.

Proportion of votes allocated to main parties in successive elections from 1981 to 1988



Source: national and local election results 1981-98



Source: Pacemaker Press

Ulster Democratic Party (UDP)

Originating from a loyalist think tank linked to the UDA paramilitary group, the UDP developed into a political party reflecting the thinking of the UDA. Since 1987 the UDP have supported power-sharing arrangements. After the loyalist ceasefires of October 1994 the UDP, along with the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), were invited to talks with officials of the British government. The UDP subsequently won representation in the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue and in the all-party talks. In 1997, UDA involvement in murder attacks forced the UDP to withdraw from talks in anticipation of a brief suspension. The party failed to gain a seat in the elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

The UUP, sometimes known as the Official Unionist Party (OUP), is the largest party in Northern Ireland. It governed Northern Ireland under the Stormont regime 1921–72. The UUP represents many shades of unionism and since the 1970s has been vulnerable to splits between more uncompromising and more flexible wings of the party. Policy has shifted between support for devolved

government and closer integration with the rest of the UK. In the Northern Ireland election for entry into talks, the UUP polled only 24.2% as the prospect of negotiations encouraged unionists to rely on more uncompromising candidates. In the 1997 General Election the party obtained 32.7% of the vote. Party leader David Trimble was elected First Minister of the new Northern Ireland Assembly. It has been the largest Northern Ireland Party at Westminster and currently has 9 MPs though the numbers have been gradually declining from 11 seats in 1983.

United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP)

This small unionist party, founded by lawyer Robert McCartney, favours closer integration of Northern Ireland with the rest of the UK. After election to the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue with 3.7% of the vote, the UKUP was admitted to all-party talks but withdrew with the DUP in 1997 in response to government contact with Sinn Féin. Leading party members broke away in early 1999 to form the Northern Ireland Unionist Party (NIUP). It currently has one seat in Westminster and one seat in the Northern Ireland Assembly, both held by Robert McCartney.

Paramilitary organizations

Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC)

Paramilitary groups with a unionist or loyalist political stance (the UVF, UFF, UDA and Red Hand Commando) have played a significant role in the Troubles, using campaigns of terror against the nationalist community. Their rationale was that the nationalist community sheltered the republican paramilitaries, and they hoped to intimidate that community to withdraw cover and pressurize republicans to end their campaign. In general there is considerable rivalry and factional feuding amongst the various groupings, but in 1994 they co-operated through the Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) to bring about a ceasefire which has largely been maintained. However, some members of the UVF broke away to form the Loyalist Volunteer Force in 1996 which continued attacks on Catholics until 1997.

Irish National Liberation Army (INLA)

A small republican paramilitary group established in 1975 by breakaway elements from the Official IRA, the INLA has suffered from factional feuding during the 1980s and 1990s. A splinter group, the Irish People's Liberation Organization (IPLA), was founded in 1987 and disbanded in 1992. The INLA observed an unofficial cessation of violence through the period of the IRA's first ceasefire (1994–96), but not during the second ceasefire until it finally made its own statement that the war was over. As with other paramilitary groups it has links with a political party, in this case the tiny Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP).

Irish Republican Army (IRA)

The IRA is the republican paramilitary group that is linked with the political party Sinn Féin. It is more accurately referred to as the Provisional IRA following a split in the republican movement in 1970. The rump organization, known as the Official IRA, declared a ceasefire in 1972 which was never rescinded. The Provisional IRA employed terrorist tactics with the aim of disrupting the British administration of Northern Ireland and of eventually forcing its withdrawal and the creation of a United Ireland. In 1994 the IRA declared a 'complete cessation of military operations', allowing Sinn Féin to participate in dialogue with the government. Membership is estimated at four hundred, with more than five thousand having passed through its ranks in the last twenty years. The IRA (along with Sinn Féin) was reluctant to decommission weapons until an executive government was established and a plan for demilitarization (the complete withdrawal of British troops) was drawn up, but following the establishment of the executive in November 1999 it appointed an interlocutor to the Decommissioning Commission.

Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF)

Formed in 1996 around dissident UVF members in the Portadown area, this small post-ceasefire loyalist paramilitary group actively engaged in violence and intimidation. LVF leader Billy Wright was assassinated in prison in 1997 by members of the INLA.

Republican splinter groups

Small groups have broken away from the mainstream republican movement since the first IRA ceasefire of 1994. Groups such as the Real IRA and Continuity IRA oppose the use of negotiation, compromise and entry into mainstream politics to achieve an Irish republic and engage in terrorist activities partly to disrupt the peace process. A bomb planted in Omagh by the Real IRA in August 1998, which killed twenty-eight people, led to a public outcry and the group has since been silent. Though they represent little military threat, actions by splinter groups can damage the peace process by raising tensions and there have been rumours that they have been linking up to co-ordinate a new campaign of violence against the Belfast Agreement.

Ulster Defence Association (UDA)

As a loyalist paramilitary group, the UDA sees its violence as defending Ulster against the threat from nationalists and the violence of republican paramilitary groups. The UDA was not declared illegal until 1992. The Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) is considered to be a more militant section within the group. The UDA took part in the loyalist ceasefire in 1994 that followed the IRA ceasefire by six weeks. In January 1997, UFF activists were implicated in a number of sectarian murders. Their combined membership is around six hundred. The political views of the UDA/UFF are represented by the UDP.

Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)

A loyalist paramilitary group, the UVF has an estimated 300–600 members. Its strategy is similar to the UDA in seeing its violence as defensive. The Red Hand Commando is an associated group. The UVF is part of the CLMC and has maintained a ceasefire since October 1994. The political views of the UVF are close to those of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), which has participated in the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue and multi-party talks and has two members elected in the Northern Ireland Assembly.



Source: Cogan Profile

Institutions from the peace process

Independent chairs

The UK and Irish governments and the political parties agreed that the talks process which began in 1996 should have independent chairs and George Mitchell, Hari Holkeri and John de Chastelain were appointed. From November 1995 to January 1996 they had been the members of the Independent Body on Decommissioning and they established at that time the confidence and respect of the parties. George Mitchell, a former US Senator for Maine and leader of the US Senate, was first involved in Northern Ireland as the President's special economic adviser on Ireland. Hari Holkeri was formerly prime minister of Finland and General John de Chastelain was formerly Chief of Staff of the Canadian Armed Forces. General de Chastelain has continued his involvement in the peace process, as chairman of the Independent Commission on Decommissioning, to oversee the decommissioning process. Senator Mitchell chaired the successful review of the Belfast Agreement from July to November 1999 after the parties could not agree on how to implement the Agreement.

Forum for Peace and Reconciliation 1994–1996

Established by the Irish Government after the IRA ceasefire to provide an opportunity to involve Sinn Féin in discussions with other political parties. It was also

attended by the other political parties in southern Ireland and the Alliance Party and SDLP from Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin was not willing to endorse the final report.

New Ireland Forum 1983–1984

Established by the Irish Government at the suggestion of John Hume to consider future governance options for the North of Ireland. Its participants were Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Irish Labour Party and the SDLP. It brought forward three options – united Ireland, federal system and joint authority between UK and Ireland – but all three were rejected by the UK government.

Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue 1996–1998

This temporary elected body, which first met in June 1996, was established by act of parliament. The complex electoral system ensured the representation of Northern Ireland's ten most popular parties on a regional and constituency basis. Parties gaining seats in the Forum and signing up to the Mitchell Principles were admitted to all-party talks. Mainly a 'talking shop' and with a majority of unionists, it was boycotted by Sinn Féin and after July 1996 the SDLP also withdrew in protest at the UK government's climb-down over Orange parades.